

SUPER BOWL ISSUE

Bears-Pats Preview
Begins On Page 8

DOUG BUFFONE'S



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BEAR REPORT

A NEWSPAPER DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO THE CHICAGO BEARS AND THE NFL.

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A Newspaper Devoted Exclusively
To The Chicago Bears and The NFL

Vol. 10, No. 25 January 23, 1986

On The Cover...

WIDE receiver Dennis McKinnon scored two touchdowns in the playoff victory over the Giants. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)



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Complete SB XX Coverage

The next issue of the BEAR REPORT will go to press on Monday, February 3. The entire BEAR REPORT staff will be on hand in New Orleans to provide detailed coverage of Super Bowl XX.

Injury Update

DT Steve McMichael (strained knee), QB Jim McMahon (strained lower back and buttocks), C Jay Hilgenberg (sprained ankle) and WR Dennis McKinnon (bruised leg) were all injured in the NFC Championship Game. All are expected to be ready for Super Bowl XX but head coach Mike Ditka says McMichael's knee will require surgery after the season.

Commentary



By
Doug
Buffone



New England Deserves Respect

There is no question that the Bears have performed exceptionally well in their two playoff victories, but I think they are going to have a tough time with the Patriots in the Super Bowl.

New England has been coming on strong since the middle of the regular season. The Patriots have gotten their offense in gear and their defense is getting better every week. The New England defense totally dominated the Jets, Raiders and Dolphins in the playoffs and that's why this club will play the Bears in Super Bowl XX.

EVERYBODY REFERS TO New England as a Cinderella team, but the Patriots are just as qualified as the Bears to be in New Orleans. They may have gotten off to a slow start in the regular season, losing three of their first five, but they came on like gangbusters and only lost two more games the rest of the way. Both of those defeats were by three-point margins.

I honestly felt the Bears would have an easy time with the Dolphins if the two clubs had met in the Super Bowl. Even though Dan Marino had a great game against the Bears in December, I felt Buddy Ryan would find a way to stop him this time.

The Patriots present a lot more problems for the Bear defense because they are a well-balanced team. Their offense was pathetic in the September contest at Soldier Field but it has improved dramatically. Tony Eason has gotten more confident and the New England running game is in fine form. The Patriots have a lot of weapons on offense.

DURING THEIR TWO playoff victories, the Bears faced two strong teams, but both clubs had one-dimensional offenses. Once the Bear defense stopped Joe Morris of the Giants and Eric Dickerson of the Rams, these games were history. The Patriots have quite a few more weapons than the Giants and Rams. New England has a variety of

dependable running backs and a whole crew of speedy wide receivers. Even though the Patriots didn't pass the ball much in the playoffs, Eason can throw with great authority when given time. Obviously, the key for the Bears will be to put constant pressure on him. They sacked Eason six times last September and forced him into making many errors. They will have to do that again on Super Sunday.

Offensively, the Bears must mix it up like they did against the Rams. But they also must do a better job in the rushing department. If New England stops the Bears' running game, QB Jim McMahon may be in for a long day. McMahon will be facing a great group of linebackers and defensive linemen who love to eat opposing quarterbacks for lunch. This defense forces quarterbacks to make a lot of errors.

Fortunately, McMahon doesn't get rattled by a tough defense. Even if he is sacked a few times, he shakes it off. The important thing for him to do in this contest is to avoid errors. He can't throw the ball up for grabs.

With the injury to speedster Irving Fryar, the Bears should have a big advantage on special teams. Fryar led the AFC in punt returns and his replacements in the AFC Championship were pathetic. The Bears will be looking for every opportunity to recover a fumble on their punt return coverage.

This is the type of game that could be decided by just one key mistake. While I feel the Bears are the stronger club and will win Super Bowl XX, I can't see them covering the point spread. New England is too strong to get blown out and could pull off an upset if the Bears goof up. But I feel the Bears are too solid a team to make errors in a game of this magnitude and that's why I'm picking them to win, 24-21.



LINEBACKER OTIS WILSON (55) strips the ball away from Eric Dickerson in the third quarter of the NFC Championship. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

Bears Romp In NFC Championship

New Orleans, Here They Come!

By Mark Friedlander
Editor

The Bears will have to win Super Bowl XX to prove they are the best team in the National Football League.

Obviously, their 15-1 regular season record and their shutout victory over the Giants in the opening round of the playoffs didn't convince people that they are the cream of the crop in the NFL this season.

PRIOR TO LAST Sunday's NFC Championship contest vs. the Rams, the Chicago newspapers were filled with stories about how the Bears could easily blow this game and become another Chicago sports team that got close to glory but couldn't win the big one. Even Jimmy the Greek, who has been drooling over the Bears' success all season long, picked the Rams to win this game just a few minutes before it began.

But as usual the Bears had the last laugh. Before 63,522 screaming faithful at Soldier Field, the Bears showed the football world why they are the best team in the league. They dominated the Rams from start to finish and notched a 24-0 victory. The win sends the Bears into their first Super Bowl ever and they will battle the New England Patriots on January 26 at the Louisiana Superdome.

"It really hasn't set in yet," said RB Walter Payton. Just a year earlier, Sweetness was in tears after the Bears were shut out by the 49ers in the NFC Championship Game at Candlestick Park. This time he could rejoice.

"**IT'S BEEN 11** years of climbing the mountain and all the sweat has finally paid off. I'm just happy to be part of this year. This is unbelievable," said Payton.

"It took us all year to get to where we want to go and now we're on our way to New Orleans," said QB Jim McMahon. He played a major role in getting the Bears into the Super Bowl. Against the Rams, he threw one touchdown pass and ran for another.

But Mike Ditka and his players made it clear they won't be satisfied with just appearing in the Super Bowl.

"**I TOLD THE FOOTBALL** team after the game there's a poem that we've come many miles but we still have many miles to go," said Ditka. "I don't want to sound like I'm not happy about what happened today but we're on a mission. It started back in San Francisco a year ago and it won't be finished until we finish up our job in New Orleans in two weeks. That's what this football team is all about. This is what they've dedicated themselves to."

"The dream won't be fulfilled until we win the Super Bowl," said WR Willie Gault who scored one of the Bear



LINEBACKER OTIS WILSON and defensive tackle Dan Hampton celebrate a big play. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

touchdowns vs. the Rams. "Our ultimate goal is to win the Super Bowl and we won't be satisfied until we win it. We have one more game. If we win it, then we'll be happy."

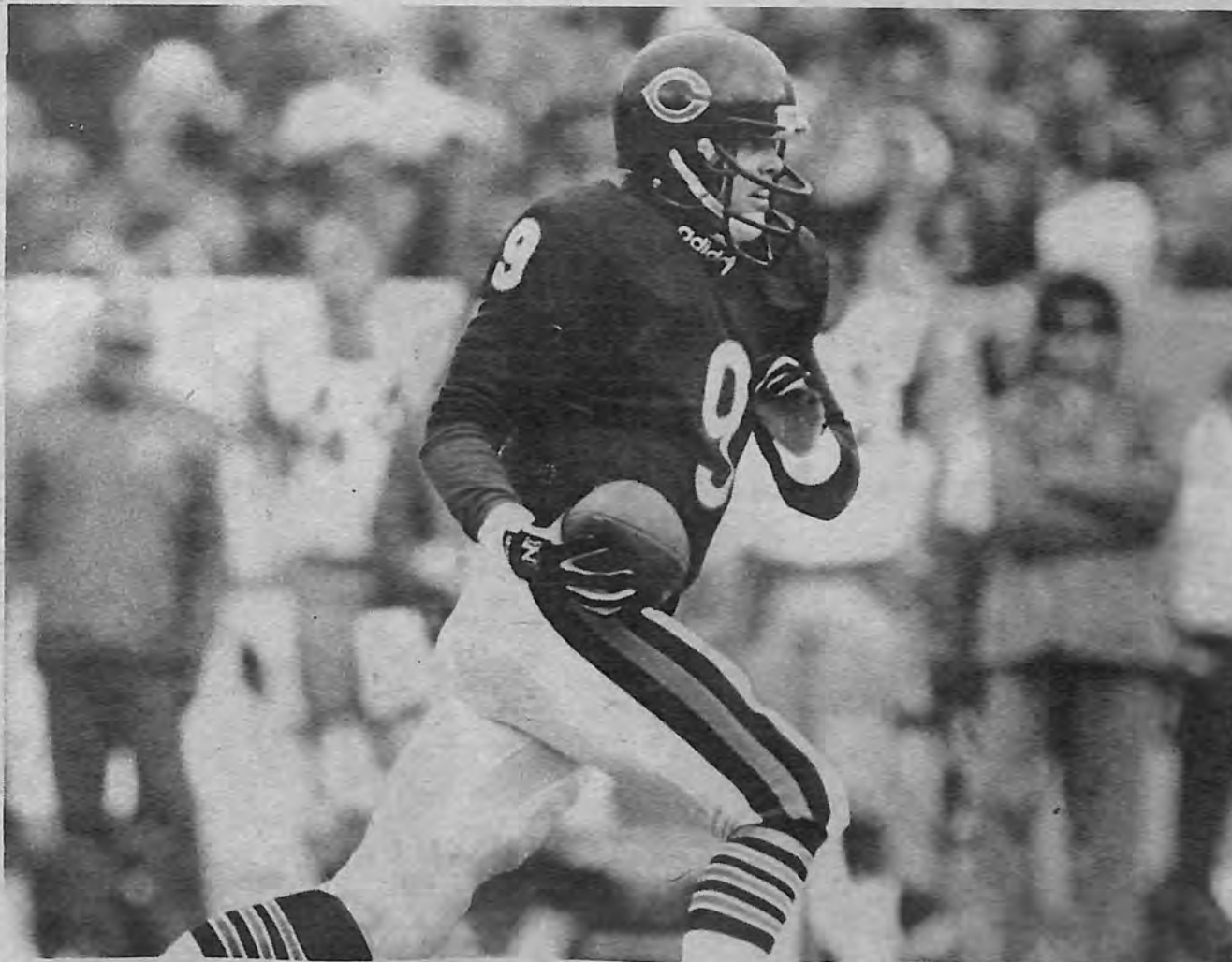
"I'm elated that we finally get a chance to get to the Super Bowl but I'm not going to be ecstatic until we win it," said FS Gary Fencik.

EVEN THOUGH THE wind bowled at 23 miles per hour

throughout the Bears-Rams contest, the weather was still much better than expected and really didn't play a key role in the outcome. An 80-degree day wouldn't have helped Rams' running back Eric Dickerson penetrate the awesome Bear defense. Dickerson, who set a playoff record vs. the Cowboys by racking up 248 rushing yards, was held to just 46 yards on 17 carries (2.7 average) by the Bears.

"We were able to get some good shots on him today," said LB Mike Singletary. "That was the bottom line. We shut off the holes. All we had to do was play football."

Continued Page 12



QUARTERBACK JIM McMAHON takes off on a 16-yard scramble for a touchdown in the first quarter. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

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Bears-Rams Official Stats

SCORING SUMMARY

Los Angeles Rams	0	0	0	0	—	0
Chicago Bears	10	0	7	7	—	24
Chicago Bears, 1, McMahon, 16-yd. run (Butler, kick) (5-56)						
Chicago Bears, 1, Butler, 34-yd. field goal (7-33)						
Chicago Bears, 3, Gault, 22-yd. pass from McMahon (Butler, kick) (9-52)						
Chicago Bears, 4, Marshall, 52-yd. fumble return (Butler, kick)						
Weather: Windy, mild high 30's, temperature: 39 degrees, wind and direction: west at 23 mph 37% humidity						
Attendance: 63,522, tickets distributed: 66,030, unused: 2,508, time: 3:04						

FINAL TEAM STATISTICS

	Rams	Bears
TOTAL FIRST DOWNS	9	13
By Rushing	5	5
By Passing	3	8
By Penalty	1	0
THIRD DOWN EFFICIENCY	2-14	4-16
FOURTH DOWN EFFICIENCY	0-0	1-1
TOTAL NET YARDS	130	232
Total Off. Plays		
(Inc. times passing)	60	61
Av. Gain per Off. Play	2.2	3.8
NET YARDS RUSHING	86	91
Total Rushing Plays	26	33
Av. Gain Per Rush. Play	3.3	2.8
NET YARDS PASSING	44	141
Times Thrown —		
Yds. Lost Att. To Pass	3-22	3-23
Gross Yds. Passing	66	164
PASS ATT. — COMP. —		
HAD INTERCEPTED	31-10-1	25-16-0
Av. Gain Per Pass Play		
(Inc. times thrown passing)	1.3	5.0
PUNTS — NO. AND AV.	11-39.2	10-36.3
Had Blocked	0	0
TOTAL RET. YARDAGE	92	40
No. and Yds. Punt Ret.	4-16	5-21
No. and Yds. KO Returns	4-76	1-22
No. and Yds. Interc. Ret.	0-0	1-3
PENALTIES — NO. AND YDS.	4-25	6-48
FUMBLES — NO. AND LOST	4-2	3-1
TOUCHDOWNS	0	3
Rushing	0	1
Passing	0	1
Returns	0	1
EXTRA POINTS MADE — ATT.	0-0	3-3
FG MADE — ATT.	0-0	1-1
TIME OF POSSESSION	25:33	34:27

FINAL INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Los Angeles Rams

	Net	Long
RUSHING	Att. Yds. Avg. Gain TD	

Dickerson	17	46	2.7	9	0
Redden	9	40	4.4	12	0

PASSING	Att.	Comp.	Yds.	TKD	Yds.	TD	LG	Had Int.
Brock	31	10	66	3/22	0	15	1	

PASS RECEIVING	No.	Yds.	LG	TD
Hunter	3	29	15	0
Brown	2	14	11	0
Dickerson	3	10	7	0
Ellard	1	5	5	0
Duckworth	1	8	8	0

INTERCEPTIONS	No.	Yds.	LG	TD
None				

PUNTING	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TB	In 20	LG
Hatcher	11	431	39.2	0	3	51

PUNT RETURNS	No.	FC	Yds.	LG	TD
Ellard	1	0	6	6	0
Johnson	2	1	6	3	0
Irvin	1	0	4	4	0

KICKOFF RETURNS	No.	Yds.	LG	TD
Redden	1	13	13	0
Brown	3	63	45	0

FUMBLES	Fum.	Own	Yds.	TD	Opp. Rec.
Dickerson	2	0	0	0	0
Johnson	1	0	-7	0	0
D. Hill	0	1	5	0	0
Gray	0	1	0	0	1
Brock	1	0	0	0	0

Chicago Bears

RUSHING	Att.	Net	Avg.	Long	TD
Payton	18	32	1.8	8	0
Suhey	6	23	3.8	9	0
McMahon	4	28	7.0	16	1
Thomas	3	-1	-0.3	1	0
Gentry	2	9	4.5	7	0

PASSING	Att.	Comp.	Yds.	TKD	Yds.	TD	LG	Had Int.
McMahon	25	16	164	3/23	1	22	0	

PASS RECEIVING	No.	Yds.	LG	TD
Moorehead	2	28	20	0
Gault	4	56	22	1



QUARTERBACK JIM McMAHON completed 16 of 25 passes for 164 yards and a touchdown vs. the Rams. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

Payton	7	48	19	0
Wrightman	1	8	8	0
Suhey	1	7	7	0
McKinnon	1	17	17	0

INTERCEPTIONS	No.	Yds.	LG	TD
Frazier	1	-3	-3	0

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TIGHT END TIM Wrightman (80) is met by a gang of Rams after he catches a pass from QB Jim McMahon. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

Bears' 'Mission' Isn't Over Yet

After the Bears' second consecutive playoff shutout, a 24-0 win over the Los Angeles Rams, Mike Ditka said: "We still have miles to go. We've been on a mission since San Francisco in 1985. We've been dedicated to winning the Super Bowl in New Orleans and the mission won't be over until we win."

The Bears will meet the New England Patriots on January 26 in Super Bowl XX. The Bears bring a 17-1 record in to this shoot-out, while the Patriots carry the glass slipper of Cinderella with them. They have won 12 of their last 14 games with both losses by only a field goal.

THE STRENGTH OF both teams is defense. The two straight playoff shutouts by the Bears is an NFL record. Buddy Ryan's various schemes have confused the league's best offensive machines and the pass rush can only be described as awesome. In both playoff games, the Bears have completely shut down outstanding runners like Joe Morris of the Giants and Eric Dickerson of the Rams. They've stopped the run, stopped the pass and stopped the points allowed.

New England is best described as an opportunistic defense which has forced 16 turnovers in three playoff games, giving its offense solid field position. That offense has capitalized on the breaks, scoring 61 out of 84 points as a result of takeaways. Both the Raiders and Dolphins turned the ball over six times in playoff losses to New England.

But neither Jim McMahon nor Tony Eason has thrown an interception in the playoffs, so something has got to give in the Super Bowl. McMahon has been brilliant with three touchdown passes and one rushing TD in two playoff games. Eason had three touchdown passes alone against the Dolphins.

IN THE SECOND game of the regular season, the Bears beat the Patriots 20-7 in a contest dominated by the Bear defense. Eason tossed three interceptions and suffered six sacks. The Patriots rushed for only 27 yards and had the ball for a total of 22 minutes. McMahon hit Dennis McKinnon with a 32-yard scoring strike in the first quarter. The only blemish against the Bears was a 90-yard

touchdown pass from Eason to Craig James, normally a tough running back but not a pass-receiving gamebreaker.

But this is a different Patriot team. They have overcome so many obstacles this season on the road to the Super Bowl that it would be foolhardy to take them lightly. They lost QB Steve Grogan to a broken leg. Then defensive tackle Kenneth Sims went down with a knee injury. Prior to the Miami game, WR Irving Fryar was lost for the season when he severed a tendon in his hand, allegedly in a domestic quarrel. The Patriots were a wild card team this year and have won three straight playoff games on



By
Dick
Gonski

the road. Clearly coach Raymond Berry can handle adversity and just as clearly, this is a team with great character.

The Bears have some great characters too. McMahon wore a sweatband with "ROZELLE" printed across the front last week after the league hit McMahon with a \$5,000 fine for wearing a commercially-sponsored sweatband.

BUT OF ALL THE angles attached to Super Bowl XX, the best by far is the belated appearance of Walter Payton in the game's most prominent showcase. The NFL's all-time leading rusher has survived 11 long seasons and has paid his dues year after year, and finally his moment is about to arrive.

Payton spoke of his feelings about appearing in the Big One after the Bears' win over Los Angeles.

"I've spent 11 years climbing the mountain, with all the sweat and it's finally paid off," he said. "After last year, I said tomorrow is never promised to anyone. We dedicated ourselves after the San Francisco game last year and said we'd be back and here we are today."

PAYTON LED THE Bears in both rushing and receiving during the regular season. He rushed for 1,551 yards and set an NFL record by rushing for 100 yards or more in nine straight games, a record currently matched by Marcus Allen. Payton caught 49 passes for 483 yards and completed three out of five passes for 96 yards. The ultimate reward would be a Super Bowl ring for Sweetness.

The Bears have been invincible when they score first this season. That allows the defense to tee off on the opposing quarterback. Scoring early against New England is twice as important when you consider this statistic: the Patriots are 123-33 in games which they led at halftime.

Throughout the playoffs, teams that turned the ball over have lost. The Patriots have won all three playoff games on the road primarily by forcing turnovers, including kick-offs. The Bears have committed just one turnover in two shutout wins in the post-season. Turnovers and takeaways will be a key in Super Bowl XX.

THE PATRIOTS HAVE a tremendous secondary led by Pro Bowl cornerback Raymond Clayborn. He totally frustrated Miami's Mark Duper so watch for him to cover Willie Gault, who has rapidly developed into a highly-reliable wide receiver. Fred Marion has an interception in each playoff game for New England. He will have deep responsibility against Gault or McKinnon.

The loss of Fryar on punt returns could prove disastrous for the Patriots. Roland James fumbled twice against Miami, so look for the Bears to go after him early.

The Bears must run the ball better than they did against the Rams' defense. They cannot afford turnovers. They must overcome the maturity of Tony Eason at quarterback.

They'll do all of these things and win Super Bowl XX 23-10.



ACTOR BILL MURRAY, a Chicago native, enjoys the victory over the Rams. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)



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Defense Does a Number On Dickerson

By Wally Gullick
BEAR REPORT Staff

Farm town watering holes in Platteville, Wisconsin are a world away from the celebrated dens of drinking and dining on Bourbon Street in New Orleans, but the Bears have accomplished a goal set back in training camp to earn a ticket to participate in the NFL's biggest game.

What began on the sun-scorched fields of that small Wisconsin town ended under swirling snow in a heavenly Bear cave called Soldier Field last Sunday.

FOR THE LATE-ARRIVING snowfall merely provided the icing on a game and a season that warmed the hearts of 64,000 Bear fans who witnessed the franchise's greatest victory in more than two decades.

Built on the premise that you can't lose if the other team doesn't score, the Bears became the first team in the history of the Super Bowl tourney to blank both playoff foes that stood in the way of denying them their first-ever appearance on Super Sunday.

The Bear defense threw up a roadblock that grounded the gliding strides of Eric Dickerson to 45 trivial yards, and it constantly harassed over-matched Ram quarterback Dieter Brock and played volleyball with his passes when he tried to throw over the top of the barking Bear rush.

"WE KNEW STOPPING Eric Dickerson first and then Dieter Brock second would have to be the keys and we did what he had to do," raved Bear middle linebacker Mike Singletary. He showed Dickerson why he was voted as the NFL's top defensive player of the year by flattening Hollywood's most heralded back in a critical third-and-one confrontation in the first quarter.

"When you've got a coach like Buddy Ryan and the kind of personnel we have it's not hard to come out on top," added the anchor man of the Bear defense.

Encoring the 21-0 whipping over the Giants with a 24-0 romp of the Rams saw the Bears dominate the stat sheets even more than they did the scoreboard, and a questionable play called by the Rams in the closing seconds of the first half helped preserve the shutout and retain the tempo.

WITH 27 SECONDS left and the clock running, Brock threw underneath the Bear defense to Eric Dickerson from the Bears' 12-yard line and Dickerson rambled down to



THE BEARS' DEFENSE gave Eric Dickerson a tough time throughout the game. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

Walter Payton Gets His Just Reward



RUNNING BACK WALTER Payton (right) found little running room against the tough Los Angeles defense. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

By Wally Gullick
BEAR REPORT Staff

No longer does Walter Payton share the ultimate of frustration with the city's sports legend of decades past, Mr. Cub, Ernie Banks.

For on the strength of the game's greatest runner ever, the Bears have completed the next-to-the last chapter in a storybook season that began with an ambition of giving Payton a chance to play in a championship contest and decorate his ring finger with the game's greatest prize.

"IT HASN'T SET in yet. Hard work and discipline finally paid off," said Payton, who ironically endured one of his poorest games in a contest that emerged as one of the most celebrated conquests in the history of the team.

Held to less than two yards a carry in 18 attempts, Payton netted only 32 yards. But as he has through the great days and the few and far between tough days, he looks only at the stats on the scoreboard. Last Sunday, those figures indicated a 24-0 Bear victory. It will allow him to appear front and center on the biggest stage the league could ever build.

"I feel very fortunate. We dedicated ourselves to winning it this year after the loss to San Francisco last year. We're going to take it all the way," claimed Payton.

WHILE PAYTON DID not bask in the spotlight of the team's 17th win of the season, Jim McMahon showed the Rams he could pass and run in the swirling winds and left a message not only for the Rams, but also offered rebuttal to NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle.

McMahon, who ran for the Bears' first touchdown, completing his 16-yard sprint with a dive into the end zone, passed for another TD when he lofted a spiral to a wide-open Willie Gault midway into the third frame.

"I think the touchdown to Willie was a big play in the ball game. It put us up 17-0 and from then on it was just our game," said McMahon, who decked himself out in the headband that carried no commercial proclamation, but simply the word of the name of the NFL king, Rozelle.

"IT DIDN'T SAY Adidas on my headband. I got fined \$5,000 for wearing that on my headband last week, so I thought this week I'd give Pete a little recognition and I hope he'll talk to the damn refs now," added McMahon. He was knifed in the back both this week and last week after hitting the turf via the slide while scrambling for first downs.

McMahon was called upon to be the focus of the Bear attack to an even greater extent due to the execution of the Ram defense which held Bear rushers to a total of 91 yards.

"The Rams are tough on defense and knew coming in here that if they could shut us down we'd be limited. But we still have enough to get the job done," noted Pro Bowl-bound offensive tackle Jim Covert.

"DENNIS MCKINNON AND Willie Gault really go after the ball and Jim McMahon is the guttiest football player I've ever seen. When we had to score points, we scored points. We're not the flashiest team on offense, but as an offense we scored 17 and the way our defense played that was enough to get it done," added Covert.

Gault snared four catches, including the touchdown strike. It was just his second TD reception all year. The speedster, who celebrated with a hurdle and a spike after the reception, turned cornerback LeRoy Irvin around with a slick inside move and then turned on the jets to the far left corner of the north end zone.

"I ran what was known as a post corner. I broke to the post as if I was going to head for the middle and then came back out. LeRoy Irvin was playing me man to man, and when he went for the inside move, I just went back out," recalled Gault. He has emerged as a consistent threat in the versatile Bear attack that has crushed successive opponents on the paved road to Bourbon Street.

NO SURPRISE TO Bear fans and to the pleasure of Gault, McMahon once again defied the orders of his skipper.

"I sent in a running play and Jim didn't like it and called a pass," said Ditka.

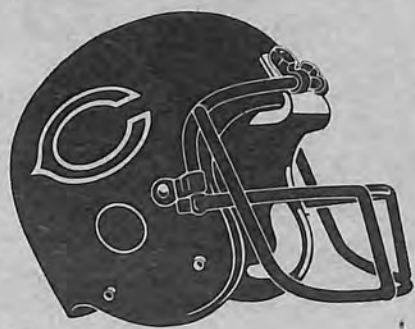
"I just thought that was the play to be called, because Jim didn't audible at the line of scrimmage. He called the pattern that gave him the option of throwing either to me deep in the end zone or to Matt Suhey in the flat and I'm just glad he called it," added Gault.

UNDER THE CLOUD of doom in last week's victorious locker room was star rookie Kevin Butler, but the Georgia kicking star was all smiles this week.

Butler helped befuddle the Rams' biggest weapon, their big-play arsenal on the special teams, with a booming kick-off that forced a touchback when it soared three yards deep into the south end zone. He also hit a precision kick

Continued Page 16

Chicago Bears vs. New England Patriots



Chicago Bears' Numerical Roster

No.	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Yr.	College
4	Steve Fuller	QB	6-4	195	28	7	Clemson
6	Kevin Butler	K	6-1	204	23	R	Georgia
8	Maury Buford	P	6-0	191	25	4	Texas Tech
9	Jim McMahon	QB	6-1	190	25	4	BYU
18	Mike Tomczak	QB	6-1	195	22	R	Ohio St.
21	Leslie Frazier	CB	6-0	187	26	5	Alcorn St.
22	Dave Duerson	S	6-1	203	24	3	Notre Dame
23	Shaun Gayle	CB	5-11	193	23	2	Ohio St.
26	Matt Suhey	FB	5-11	216	27	6	Penn St.
27	Mike Richardson	CB	6-0	188	24	3	Arizona St.
29	Dennis Gentry	RB	5-8	181	26	4	Baylor
31	Thomas Sanders	RB	5-11	203	23	R	Texas A&M
31	Ken Taylor	CB	6-1	185	21	R	Oregon St.
33	Calvin Thomas	FB	5-11	245	25	4	Illinois
34	Walter Payton	RB	5-10	202	31	11	Jackson St.
45	Gary Fencik	S	6-1	196	31	10	Yale
48	Reggie Phillips	DB	5-10	170	24	R	S. Methodist
50	Mike Singletary	LB	6-0	228	26	5	Baylor
51	Jim Morrissey	LB	6-3	215	22	R	Michigan St.
52	Cliff Thrift	LB	6-1	230	29	7	E.C. Oklahoma
54	Brian Cabral	LB	6-1	227	29	7	Colorado
55	Otis Wilson	LB	6-2	232	27	6	Louisville
57	Tom Thayer	G-C	6-4	261	23	R	Notre Dame
58	Wilber Marshall	LB	6-1	225	23	2	Florida
59	Ron Rivera	LB	6-3	239	23	2	California
60	Tom Andrews	OL	6-4	267	24	2	Louisville
62	Mark Bortz	G	6-6	269	24	3	Iowa
63	Jay Hilgenberg	C	6-3	258	26	5	Iowa
70	Henry Waechter	DT	6-5	275	26	4	Nebraska
71	Andy Frederick	T	6-6	265	31	9	New Mexico
72	William Perry	DT	6-2	325	22	R	Clemson
73	Mike Hartenstein	DE	6-3	254	32	11	Pennsylvania St.
74	Jim Covert	T	6-4	271	25	3	Pittsburgh
75	Stefan Humphries	G	6-3	263	23	2	Michigan
76	Steve McMichael	DT	6-2	260	27	6	Texas
78	Keith Van Horne	T	6-6	280	27	5	USC
80	Tim Wrightman	TE	6-3	237	25	R	UCLA
82	Ken Margerum	WR	6-0	180	26	4	Stanford
83	Willie Gault	WR	6-0	178	24	3	Tennessee
85	Dennis McKinnon	WR	6-1	185	23	3	Florida St.
87	Emery Moorehead	TE	6-2	220	31	9	Colorado
89	Keith Ortego	WR	6-0	180	22	R	McNeese St.
95	Richard Dent	DE	6-5	263	24	3	Tennessee St.
98	Tyrone Keys	DE	6-7	267	25	3	Mississippi St.
99	Dan Hampton	DT	6-5	267	27	7	Arkansas

COACHING STAFF

HEAD COACH: Mike Ditka

ASSISTANTS: Jim Dooley, Dale Haupt, Ed Hughes, Steve Kazor, Jim LaRue, Ted Plumb, Johnny Roland, Buddy Ryan, Dick Stanfel.



JANUARY 26, 1986
LOUISIANA SUPERDOME, NEW ORLEANS

4:15 p.m. CST



By Bear Report Staff

After going 15-1 in the regular season, it is really no surprise that the Bears will play in Super Bowl XX at the Louisiana Superdome on Sunday, January 26.

However, many people are surprised that the New England Patriots will be representing the American Football Conference in this grand event. This is a club which was 2-3 after five weeks of the regular season. New England had to fight its way into the playoffs and had to go on the road for three consecutive games in the post-season.

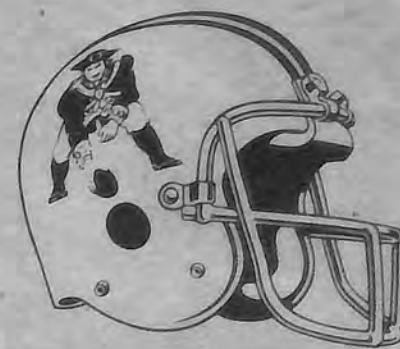
BUT UNDER THE direction of second-year head coach Raymond Berry, the Patriots knocked off their foes in the playoffs like a bunch of bowling pins. First it was the Jets (26-14 in the AFC wild card game), then it was the Raiders (27-20 in the divisional playoff) and then came the Dolphins (31-14 in the AFC Championship).

The most amazing thing about the victory over the Dolphins was it took place at the Orange Bowl, a place where the Patriots had lost 18 consecutive times.

"It's hard to believe it's all happening," said Berry. "I thought we could win it going in but now that it's happening, it's really hard to believe it's happening."

"WE DIDN'T BELIEVE in jinxes," said Patriot safety Fred Marion. "We're a positive thinking team. We don't think negative. People talk about the jinx, wanting to make it 19 in a row, but we gained respect from people around the country that the Patriots are not a team who will show up and not win the big game."

Continued Page 10



New Eng. Patriots' Numerical Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Age	Yr.	College
1	Tony Franklin	K	5-8	182	28	7	Texas A&M
3	Rich Camarillo	P	5-11	185	26	5	Washington
11	Tony Eason	QB	6-4	212	26	3	Illinois
12	Tom Ramsey	QB	6-1	189	24	1	UCLA
14	Steve Grogan	QB	6-4	210	32	11	Kansas St.
23	Rod McSwain	CB	6-1	198	23	2	Clemson
24	Robert Weathers	RB	6-2	222	25	4	Arizona State
26	Ray Clayborn	CB	6-0	186	30	9	Texas
27	Greg Hawthorne	WR-HB	6-2	225	29	7	Baylor
28	Jim Bowman	S	6-2	210	22	R	Central Michigan
30	Mosi Tatupu	FB	6-0	227	30	8	S. California
31	Fred Marion	FS	6-2	191	26	4	Miami, FL
32	Craig James	FB	6-0	215	24	2	S. Methodist
33	Tony Collins	HB	5-11	212	26	5	East Carolina
38	Roland James	SS	6-2	191	27	6	Tennessee
42	Ronnie Lippett	CB	5-11	180	24	3	Miami, FL
43	Ernest Gibson	DB	5-10	185	24	2	Furman
50	Larry McGrew	LB	6-5	233	28	5	S. California
51	Brian Ingram	LB	6-4	235	26	4	Tennessee
52	Johnny Rembert	LB	6-3	234	24	3	Clemson
54	Ed Williams	LB	6-4	244	24	2	Texas
55	Don Blackmon	LB	6-3	235	27	5	Tulsa
56	Andre Tippett	LB	6-3	241	25	4	Iowa
57	Steve Nelson	LB	6-2	230	34	12	N. Dakota St.
58	Pete Brock	C	6-5	275	31	10	Colorado
60	Garin Veris	DE	6-4	255	22	R	Stanford
61	Ron Wooten	G	6-4	273	26	4	North Carolina
66	Paul Fairchild	G	6-4	270	24	2	Kansas
67	Steve Moore	G-T	6-4	285	25	3	Tennessee State
70	Art Plunkett	T	6-7	260	26	5	Nev.-Las Vegas
72	Lester Williams	NT	6-3	272	26	4	Miami-FL
73	John Hannah	G	6-3	265	34	13	Alabama
75	Guy Morriss	C-G	6-4	255	34	13	Texas Christian
76	Brian Holloway	T	6-7	288	26	5	Stanford
80	Irving Fryar	WR-KR	6-0	200	23	2	Nebraska
81	Stephen Starring	WR-KR	5-10	172	24	3	McNeese State
82	Derwin Williams	WR	6-0	170	24	1	New Mexico
83	Cedric Jones	WR	6-1	184	25	4	Duke
85	Julius Adams	DE	6-3	270	37	14	Texas Southern
86	Stanley Morgan	WR	5-11	181	30	9	Tennessee
87	Lin Dawson	TE	6-3	240	26	5	N. Carolina State
88	Derrick Ramsey	TE	6-5	235	28	8	Kentucky
92	Smiley Creswell	DE	6-4	251	25	1	Michigan St.
95	Ed Reynolds	LB	6-5	230	24	3	Virginia
98	Dennis Owens	NT	6-1	258	25	4	N. Carolina St.
99	Ben Thomas	DE	6-4	280	24	R	Auburn

COACHING STAFF

HEAD COACH: Raymond Berry

ASSISTANTS: Dean Brittenham, Jim Carr, Bobby Grier, Rod Humenuik, Harold Jackson, Ed Khayat, John Polonchek, Rod Rust, Dante Scarnecchia, Don Shinnick, Les Steckel.



P Rich Camarillo



PK Tony Franklin



SS Roland James



WR Stanley Morgan



ILB Steve Nelson



NEW ENGLAND RUNNING back Tony Collins tries to escape from Gary Fencik in the Sept. 15 game at Soldier Field. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

Super Bowl XX Lineups

Patriots' Defense

LE 60 Garin Veris, 92 Smiley Creswell
 NT 72 Lester Williams, 98 Dennis Owens
 RE 85 Julius Adams, 99 Ben Thomas
 LOLB 56 Andre Tippett, 54 Ed Williams
 LILB 57 Steve Nelson, 95 Ed Reynolds
 RILB 50 Larry McGrew, 52 Johnny Rembert
 ROLB 55 Don Blackmon, 51 Brian Ingram
 LCB 42 Ronnie Lippett, 23 Rod McSwain
 SS 38 Roland James, 28 Jim Bowman
 FS 31 Fred Marion, 28 Jim Bowman
 RCB 26 Raymond Clayborn, 43 Ernest Gibson

Patriots' Offense

WR 86 Stanley Morgan, 83 Cedric Jones
 WR 81 Stephen Starring, 27 Greg Hawthorne
 LT 76 Brian Holloway, 70 Art Plunkett
 LG 73 John Hannah, 75 Guy Morriss
 C 58 Pete Brock, 75 Guy Morriss
 RG 61 Ron Wooten, 66 Paul Fairchild
 RT 67 Steve Moore, 70 Art Plunkett
 TE 87 Lin Dawson, 88 Derrick Ramsey
 QB 11 Tony Eason, 14 Steve Grogan
 HB 33 Tony Collins, 24 Robert Weathers
 FB 32 Craig James, 30 Mosi Tatupu

Patriots' Specialists

P 3 Rich Camarillo, 1 Tony Franklin
 PK 1 Tony Franklin, 3 Rich Camarillo
 H 11 Tony Eason, 12 Tom Ramsey
 PC 75 Guy Morriss, 61 Ron Wooten
 KC 75 Guy Morriss, 61 Ron Wooten
 PR 38 Roland James, 81 Stephen Starring
 KR 81 Stephen Starring, 83 Cedric Jones

Bears' Offense

WR 83 Willie Gault, 82 Ken Margerum
 LT 74 Jim Covert, 71 Andy Frederick
 LG 62 Mark Bortz, 75 Stefan Humphries
 C 63 Jay Hilgenberg, 60 Tom Andrews
 RG 57 Tom Thayer, 75 Stefan Humphries
 RT 78 Keith Van Horne, 71 Andy Frederick
 TE 87 Emery Moorehead, 80 Tim Wrightman
 RB 34 Walter Payton, 29 Dennis Gentry
 FB 26 Matt Suhey, 33 Calvin Thomas
 QB 9 Jim McMahon, 4 Steve Fuller
 WR 85 Dennis McKinnon, 89 Keith Ortego

Bears' Defense

LE 99 Dan Hampton, 73 Mike Hartenstine
 LT 76 Steve McMichael, 72 William Perry
 RT 72 William Perry, 99 Dan Hampton
 RE 95 Richard Dent, 98 Tyrone Keys
 LLB 55 Otis Wilson, 52 Cliff Thrift
 MLB 50 Mike Singletary, 52 Cliff Thrift
 RLB 58 Wilber Marshall, 59 Ron Rivera
 SS 22 Dave Duerson, 23 Shaun Gayle
 FS 45 Gary Fencik, 23 Shaun Gayle
 LC 27 Mike Richardson, 48 Reggie Phillips
 RC 21 Leslie Frazier, 31 Ken Taylor

Bears' Specialists

PK 6 Kevin Butler
 P 8 Maury Buford
 PC 63 Jay Hilgenberg, 57 Tom Thayer
 KC 63 Jay Hilgenberg, 57 Tom Thayer
 H 4 Steve Fuller, 18 Mike Tomczak
 PR 89 Keith Ortego, 31 Ken Taylor
 KR 83 Willie Gault, 29 Dennis Gentry

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Super Bowl

Continued From Page 8

Like they had done in the victories over the Jets and Raiders, when they forced 10 turnovers, the Patriots forced the Dolphins to cough up the ball six times. Dolphin quarterback Dan Marino was intercepted twice and Miami also fumbled four times.

"If you have a large number of takeaways, it's going to make it easier for you to win," said Berry. The Patriots took advantage of the great field position by scoring four touchdowns and a field goal. Quarterback Tony Eason completed 10 of 12 passes for 71 yards and two touchdowns while running back Craig James compiled 105 yards on the ground.

WHILE THE DOLPHIN players and their fans were stunned by the outcome, Bears' head coach Mike Ditka wasn't. He had predicted the Patriots would upset Miami.

"After the second week of the season, I said New England was going to be one of the best teams in the league. There is no question they are the best club in the AFC. I know that may make a lot of people mad, but that's how I feel," he said.

Ditka formed his opinion on the Patriots following the Bears' 20-7 victory over New England in week two of the regular season at Soldier Field. In that game, the Patriots only crossed the 50-yard line one time. Eason was sacked six times and was intercepted three times. The lone highlight for the Patriots was a 90-yard touchdown pass-play from Eason to James in the fourth quarter.

"**IF THE BEARS** are the same team we played in September, it's going to be a heck of a game," said Berry.

"It's a great challenge to play the Bears again," said James. "They dominated us during the season, but we're a different club. Back then we were looking for our offense."

Ditka says the Patriots have improved dramatically because of the offense they are employing.

"**THEY OPERATE THEIR** offense a lot like ours," he said. "They can throw the ball when they have to and they can run with great authority."

The Patriots also possess a potent defense which recorded 51 sacks and 23 interceptions during the regular season.

"This is the best defense I've ever played on," says DE Julius Adams. "It's the best we've ever had and that includes the playoff teams of 1976 and 1978. We have the best preparation from (defensive coordinator Ron) Rust, we're all playing as a team and we're all making plays to help each other."

EVEN THOUGH THE Patriots entered the playoffs as a wild card entry, they have been playing like a Super Bowl contender for weeks. They won nine of their last 11 regu-



THE PATRIOTS' DEFENSE did a good job of stopping the Bears' running game in the regular season contest between the two clubs. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

lar season games and the two losses were by only three points each. The surge included a six-game winning streak.

"After the fifth game, when we were 2-3, coach Berry told us he was proud of us and proud of the way we were playing," said OG John Hannah, a 13-year veteran. "He told us we were still making mistakes but those mistakes can be corrected. He said if we continue to display a lot of effort good things are going to happen."

"Ray has done a great job with them," said Ditka. "This is a good football team. They've got a lot of good athletes."

ONE OF THOSE good athletes is Eason, the three-year veteran out of Illinois. Early in the season, Eason was throwing interceptions in bunches, and in fact finished the year with 17. In the sixth game, Eason sustained a sepa-

rated shoulder and was replaced by Steve Grogan. The 11-year veteran out of Kansas State led the team to six consecutive victories but sustained torn knee cartilage in a late November contest vs. the Jets and was subsequently placed on injured-reserve. Eason took back the controls and led the club into the playoffs. He finished the season with a 67.5 rating as he completed 56.2 percent of his passes, 11 going for touchdowns.

"I learned a few things while I was out," Eason said. "I learned you have to ignore a lot of people and just play. I learned that what they say doesn't matter."

"Eason has matured quite a bit this year," said Ditka. "He is doing the things they expect of him." While he didn't throw the ball a whole lot in the playoffs, he did complete over 60 percent of his passes. Five went for touchdowns and he did not toss a single interception.

WITH SPEEDSTER IRVING Fryar out with a hand injury, Eason will rely on WR Stanley Morgan, James and running back Tony Collins to be his main targets in the Super Bowl. During the regular season, Morgan led the club with a 19.5 average on 39 catches for 760 yards and 5 touchdowns. Collins caught 52 for 549 yards while James nabbed 27 for 360. Fryar, who was hurt in an alleged domestic quarrel, caught 39 for 670 and scored seven touchdowns during the regular season.

James is also a serious threat on the ground. During the regular season, he rushed for 1,227 yards, the second-most in Patriots' history. He finished third in the AFC. Collins rushed for 657 yards.

The club's offensive line is led by perennial Pro Bowler Hannah. Tackle Brian Holloway was also voted into the Pro Bowl this season.

NEW ENGLAND'S DEFENSE, which allowed 294 yards per contest in the regular season, includes a potent defensive line, excellent linebackers and a fabulous backfield. Three of those defensive starters (linebackers Andre Tippett and Steve Nelson, and CB Ray Clayborn) are going to the Pro Bowl.

"I think the Bears are going to be playing the best defense they've seen all year," said New England guard Ron Wooten. "If we get the ball with the lead, I don't think they can shut us down."

During the regular season, Nelson led the team in tackles with 128. He also recorded two sacks. Marion had 124 tackles and led the team in interceptions with seven. Tippett led the club in sacks with 16½ and had 84 tackles. Rookie DE Garin Veris had 10 sacks.

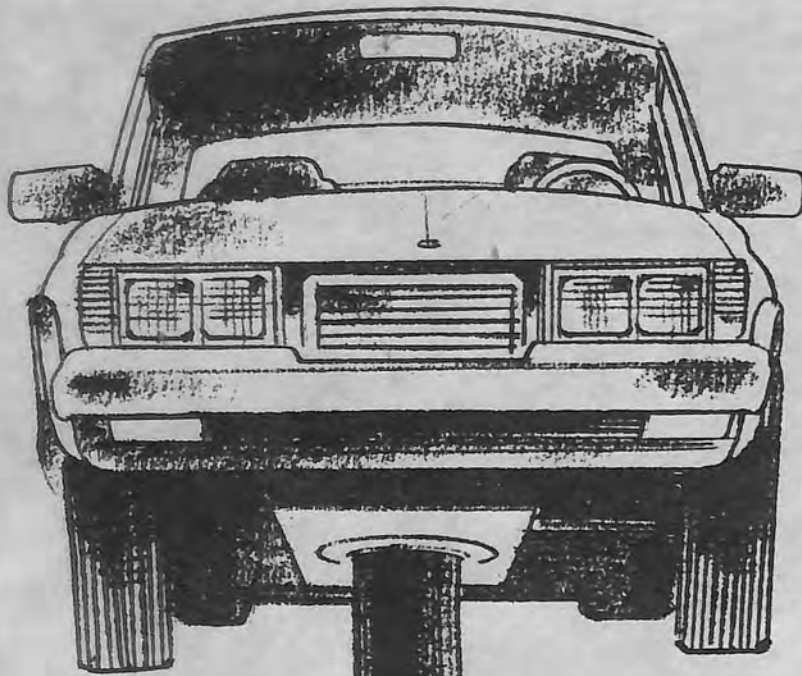
FRYAR AVERAGED 14.1 on punt returns and led the AFC during the regular season, but will be replaced by Roland James and Stephen Starring in the Super Bowl. Starring averaged 21.1 on kickoff returns in the regular season. Punter Rich Camarillo finished third in the AFC with a 43.0 average. Placekicker Tony Franklin connected on 24 of 30 field goals during the regular season.

"We've come this far but we aren't done yet," says Adams, a 14-year veteran who will be retiring after the season. "We still have one more big one to win."

"These are two very similar teams. It ought to be a great game," said Ditka.



NEW ENGLAND QUARTERBACK Tony Eason had a tough time figuring out the Bear defense last September. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)



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Bears Win

Continued From Page 3

"Our defense is something. They took the game away from them. I don't know how we can play much better than we did today," said Ditka.

NOT ONLY DID the Bears shut down Dickerson, but they forced the Rams to pass much more than they had planned. During the regular season, Los Angeles ranked 28th in the NFL in passing and it showed vs. the Bears. Quarterback Dieter Brock completed just 10 of 31 passes for 66 yards. He was intercepted once and was sacked three times.

"Our defense was awesome today. I wouldn't have wanted to be in Dieter's shoes," said McMahon. "You've got to throw the ball on the money or else it's gonna take off and just float on you. It's tough to throw in this wind but it's even tougher when you've got guys in your face all day."

"Brock had a lot to worry about," said DT William Perry who recorded one of the three sacks. "The pressure was coming from all over. He was probably worried about (Richard) Dent coming from the outside and didn't even see me coming up the middle."

WHILE BROCK COULDN'T hit the broad side of a barn, McMahon passed with pinpoint accuracy throughout the contest. He completed 16 of 25 passes for 164 yards and came up with an endless array of key plays.

"Jim is crazy. He was a nut out there today," said Payton. "He did everything but take his clothes off out there. He might have done that if the game had gone on a little longer. He's a field general. When he's out there he takes complete control. He yells at the linemen. He yells at the wide receivers. But he smiles at the running backs."

Not only did McMahon stick it to the Rams, but he also kicked dirt in the face of NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle. A few days before this game, McMahon received word from Rozelle that he had been fined \$5,000 for wearing a "Adidas" headband in the playoff game vs. the Giants. Last Sunday, McMahon wore a headband which said "ROZELLE."

"I **FELT IF** I gave Pete a little publicity he won't fine me. That's football... that's politics, rather," said McMahon.

Right from the opening drive, McMahon grabbed control of the Bear offense and showed why he is the type of quarterback that can get a team into the Super Bowl. The drive began with a 20-yard pass to TE Emery Moorehead and a 19-yard completion to Gault. Three plays later, McMahon scrambled 16 yards into the end zone and the Bears took a 7-0 lead.

"We had a pass set up on that play but they play a lot of zone, even deep in plus-territory," said McMahon. "I just saw an alley up the middle and took off. Dennis Gentry made a heck of a block to get me in the end zone."

"THAT'S WHAT MAKES Jim such a threat," said Dit-

ka. "He was our leading passer, rusher and scorer today. He couldn't have done much else."

This drive established the Bears weren't going to just rely on Payton in this game. And it was a good thing because Sweetness was held to just 32 yards on 18 carries (1.8 average) and the Bears as a team compiled only 91 yards on the ground.

"Everybody assumes we can't throw the football. We can throw the football as well as anybody," said Ditka. "They play so much zone we tried to move the ball by throwing underneath like we did."

FOLLOWING ANOTHER Ram punt, the Bears began their second scoring drive with 8:26 to go in the first quarter. Once again, it was McMahon's passing which got the team moving. He opened the drive with a 19-yard completion to Payton and that was followed by a 8-yard toss to TE Tim Wrightman. The drive eventually stalled at the Ram 16 but Kevin Butler nailed a 34-yard field goal to make it 10-0.

The Rams continued to have problems getting their offense going but the Los Angeles defense stiffened up in the second quarter and held the Bears in check.

"They have an extremely aggressive defense. That is the best unit we have played all year," said C Jay Hilgenberg.

BEFORE THE HALF ended, the Rams got the break they needed. With 1:04 left, Jerry Gray recovered a fumble on a punt return. The ball had inadvertently hit rookie Reggie Phillips in the leg as he tried to get out of the way, but nevertheless, Los Angeles had the ball at the Bear 21 and it appeared they would get at least three points. On third-and-one at the Bear 12, Brock completed a seven-yard pass to Dickerson. However, time ran out before the Rams could call a time out to kick a field goal.

"They made a mistake and let the clock run out. That was a big play for us," said Hilgenberg.

"I looked up at the clock and saw zero when Dickerson came down with the ball," said Ditka. "You can't score when the clock runs out."

AS THE SECOND half began, there was no question the Rams still had a chance to get back into this game, but they had already scrapped their game plan. Instead of giving it to Dickerson, they started to put the ball up in the air. When they finally gave it to Eric the great, he fumbled when hit by Otis Wilson. The ball was recovered by Mike Richardson at the Bear 48. It was the second time Dickerson had fumbled in the game. Earlier in the week, Bear defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan had predicted Dickerson would fumble three times in this contest.

"You can't expect a good back like Dickerson to fumble three times in a big game like this even though Buddy does," said DT Dan Hampton. "He wants us to hold everyone to minus 100 yards every week too."

The Bears took advantage of the good field position following the Richardson recovery at the Bear 48. The key play of the drive came at the Ram 35 when the Bears had it fourth-and-six. McMahon called a time out because the



QUARTERBACK JIM McMAHON throws the ball to a wide-open Willie Gault for a third quarter touchdown. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

30-second clock was winding down and it was a smart move. The ensuing play became a 13-yard pass to Payton which moved the ball down to the Ram 22.

"MY JOB ON A play like that is to get out six or seven yards. Nobody was on me. It was like that all day," said Payton.

"I thought it was a good decision on Mike's part to let us go for it," said McMahon. "Walter went out on the sidelines and was wide open."

Two plays after the Payton catch, McMahon connected with a wide-open Gault on a 22-yard scoring strike in the end zone which made it 17-0. It was the first touchdown Gault had scored since the third game of the regular season.

"JIM CALLED A different play in the huddle. I thought it was the play that was sent in. I'm glad he called it because it worked," said Gault. "I gave LeRoy (Irvin) an inside move and went back out."

"The coach sent in a draw play and I didn't agree with it. I hope they all work like that," said McMahon.

Before the game ended, the defense got a chance to score. With less than three minutes left, Brock was sacked by Dent and Dent also forced the ball loose. It was picked up by LB Wilber Marshall and he raced 52 yards for a touchdown to make it 24-0.

MARSHALL SAID HE was happy about scoring the touchdown but was even happier for one of his teammates, Payton.

"I sit right behind him on the plane on every road trip," Marshall said. "There is nothing like this person. His pride and his love for his teammates. There is not a guy on this team who cares more for his fellow players. He is the greatest player who ever played this game."

Team president Michael McCaskey, who rejoiced with his players in the locker room, said his grandfather, the late George Halas, would have been thrilled with this win.

"He would have been proud. This was his kind of victory," McCaskey said.

GAME NOTES: LB Wilber Marshall became the 23rd Bear to score a point this season... Prior to this game, no NFL club had ever gone through two consecutive playoff games without allowing a point... The Bears have won 21 of the last 25 games QB Jim McMahon has started. McMahon completed 58.7 percent of his passes in the playoffs and had a QB rating of 107.1... Walter Payton led the Bears in rushing in the playoffs with 125 yards and he also led the club in receiving with eight catches. WR Willie Gault caught seven for 124 yards... FS Gary Fencik led the Bears in tackles in the playoffs with 14 (11 solos). DE Richard Dent led the team in sacks with 4.5... The Bears have won 10 consecutive games at Soldier Field and 19 of their last 21 at home... They have outscored all 18 of their opponents in the second half this season and have held a third quarter lead in 17 of the 18 games... The Bears have outrushed 17 of their 18 opponents this season and have outgained 17 of the 18... Game time temperature was 39° with a wind out of the west at 23 MPH, but there were still 2,508 no shows... The Bears had the ball for nine more minutes than the Rams.



WIDE RECEIVER WILLIE Gault (83) is stopped by Vince Newsome after making a catch. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

Bears Should Have No Problems With Patriots

It's a darn shame, really. It could have been a perfect season after all had the Bears been able to play the Miami Dolphins in Super Bowl XX.

Maybe it's just as well. After they beat New England, someone will always be there to remind them, "Yeah, but you lost that one to Miami." Something to keep them humble.

IS THERE ANY doubt left that the Bears will win the Super Bowl? Is there any way they can lose?

Football people know there's a way. There's always a way.



By
Don
Pierson

Jim Parmer, one of the scouts responsible for the Bears' success, nervously paced the floor during the NFC party on the eve of the title game against the Rams.

"**WHENEVER TWO TEAMS** line up, one of them can win," said Parmer.

He had scouted Eric Dickerson, too, when Dickerson was in college.

"He's rare," said Parmer.

IN THE SAME backfield with Dickerson at SMU was Craig James, now of the Patriots. Bears' middle linebacker Mike Singletary of Baylor had to stop them both in one game, and did. He did not have the luxury of two weeks rest in between.

There will be plenty of time for celebration after Super Bowl XX, as the Bears themselves point out. They were subdued in their joy after beating the Rams.

"We have to work our butts off for two weeks and then party. For six months," said defensive tackle Steve McMichael.

EVEN THE PLAYOFF record of two consecutive shutouts failed to lull the Bears into euphoria. They know better than anyone else that they could lose to the Patriots.

What they know cannot happen is for the Patriots to beat them. It is what they have proven week in and week out

Continued Next Page



QUARTERBACK JIM McMAHON (9) dives into the end zone to score the first touchdown in the NFC Championship. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

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Patriots

Continued From Page 13

during this remarkable season. It is what they have said and it is what they have done. It is our fault, not theirs, that their confidence and skill has been sometimes mistaken for braggadocio and shill.

These Bears are as good as they talk because they constantly and consistently put their forearms where their mouths are. Just because they are better boosters than most doesn't make them lesser players.

COACH MIKE DITKA is not afraid to let his players boast because he is not afraid to let them win.

In answer to what some thought was a premature recording of the Super Bowl Shuffle, Ditka responded: "What do you want them to do? Not talk about the Super Bowl after they have won their division and clinched the home field advantage? If you have a goal, you better mark it up there real high on your list and show it to people: 'This is where I want to go.'"

It is time to get the picture. The Bears truly are a football team that cannot be beaten. They could lose, but they cannot be beaten.

"IF WE PLAY our game, play the way we are capable, then no one can beat us," said linebacker Otis Wilson.

The Dolphins will forever argue that Dan Marino beat them. The Bears will forever argue that the Bears failed to allow Walter Payton a chance to beat the Dolphins.

For reasons he may always regret, Ditka chose to get into a shootout with Marino in the first quarter. It was a bold move considering he had Steve Fuller at quarterback instead of Jim McMahon. But it wouldn't have been smart even with McMahon at the controls.

THE CLEVELAND Browns and the Patriots proved the Dolphins cannot stop the run. Ditka admitted it. The Dolphins won 38-24. They scored from the 6-yard line after a blocked punt and on a tipped pass.

Tony Eason will prove to be the second-best quarterback the Bears have faced. He has the touch to hit his receivers accurately downfield with little time to set up and aim. He is the kind of quarterback with the kind of speedy wide receivers equipped to match up against the Bears.

But he was sacked six times and threw three interceptions in the Bears' 20-7 victory in the second game of the season. Granted, it was early. Eason has matured. He also will have a healthier Stanley Morgan and a healthier offensive line.

BUT THE BEARS' defense is better, too.

All during the season, they argued that the Patriots' game was their best showing.

The Patriots got into Bear territory for 21 seconds, including the 90-yard touchdown pass from Eason to James

that ruined the shutout late in the game. It was a breakdown in coverage by Wilber Marshall, who doesn't break down anymore.

The Bears called the Patriots the most stereotyped team they had seen in some time. Buddy Ryan was ecstatic about his game plan. During the game, Singletary was calling out Patriot plays before Eason got the snap.

"I LOOKED OVER at Mike once and said, 'Do you have a crystal ball?'" said Wilson.

"Give Buddy two weeks to come up with a game plan and I don't know how anybody can beat it," said safety Dave Duerson.

Overlooked as usual in the earlier defeat of the Patriots was the role of the offense. With quarterback Jim McMahon nursing a sore neck and running back Walter Payton nursing sore ribs, the offense nevertheless controlled the ball for 37 minutes, 25 seconds.

ONE REASON THE defense led the league in yardage allowed is that the offense led the league in keeping the ball.

The Bears could probably beat the Patriots with defense alone. Better yet, they don't have to.

They could lose if they commit turnovers or penalties or blow assignments. They haven't done that all year. Why should they start in the Super Bowl?

"The difference between this year and all the others is this year, we expect to win," said safety Gary Fencik.

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Punishing Defense Is Bears' Trademark

Scouts have two terms to measure the aggressiveness of a player's nature.

"There are strikers and there are catchers," says Bill Tobin, the Bears' personnel director.

STRIKERS GO TO the action. Catchers wait for the action. On defense, strikers run through the tackle, not just to it.

"On our defense, I don't think we have any catchers," Tobin says.

"That's one reason the Bears led the league in turnovers, yards allowed, first downs allowed and points allowed. It's a reason they held 13 of 18 teams to 10 points or less and had 10 players score points themselves, counting William Perry at fullback.

THEY MAKE BIG plays. So do the New England Patriots, who led the AFC in takeaways and reached the Super Bowl largely because of them. It's not unlikely that one of those teams' defensive big plays will turn the Super Bowl around.

One play could boil six minutes of practice and meetings, six months of pain and persistence into six seconds of football.

Big defensive plays are always important in playoff games because the teams are so evenly matched. The winning team is often the one who can score the easiest touchdowns, the short drives after a turnover. When the Bears beat the Rams for the NFC championship, their two touchdown drives and one field goal drive started behind their 44-yard line. The defense scored the other touchdown by itself.

THE BEARS DO IT with blitzing and man-to-man coverage, which harasses an offense into coughing up the ball. Even when they weren't forcing a turnover, they gave up the fewest first downs in the league. When the other guys punt, you've taken the ball away.

"When you blitz a lot, it takes the edge off. It's a stimulating thing."

Especially for the Bear players. They like to cuff players around. They're hitters.

THEY DON'T DO it grudgingly just because it's part of football. They do it because hitting is the part that makes football enjoyable.

"For most of us, if we weren't allowed opportunities like this, we'd probably be in jail," safety Dave Duerson says. "When I go home, I'm mild-mannered. I don't have to punch the walls because I do it out on the field and it's legal."

Even among pro football players, there are some who prefer intercepting passes and some who prefer knocking people out. Back-up safety Shaun Gayle plays a position that has either kind of player, but he prefers knocking people out. William Perry prefers it to scoring touchdowns.

By
Kevin
Lamb



THE CORNERBACKS WOULD rather intercept passes. That's their job. But even they don't back away from a rousing collision. Besides, Tobin says Leslie Frazier is a player who might have gone either way, striker or catcher. Playing with so many strikers, he became one, too.

"A good, solid lick is the most exciting thing any defensive player can do," linebacker Wilber Marshall says. "It feels good. Like winning the lottery. Your heart drops."

Linebacker Otis Wilson says he visualizes himself making solid hits before each game. With the Patriots coming up, he has pictured himself chopping down Craig James or sacking Tony Eason. He pictures himself making interceptions, too.

"**THAT HIT ON** Danny White, I saw myself doing that twice before I did it," Wilson says of the block that knocked the Dallas quarterback out.

Big plays involve more than a zest for contact. Players have to make them. They're not necessarily the best ones. They're the ones with the knack of popping the ball loose or getting to the quarterback.

"I call them aware players," Ryan says. "You've got certain players that have an instinct. They know when to swipe the ball away." He says defensive end Richard Dent, free safety Gary Fencik and Marshall have the Bears' best instincts.

DENT MAY BE the best defender in the league at turning ordinary plays into big ones. His awareness was the turning point in two Bear victories and dominated two others.

His tipped pass in the season opener led to Leslie Frazier's interception and touchdown. Coach Mike Ditka said that play may have been the biggest in the season, since the Bears trailed 28-17 at the time. Against Dallas, Dent intercepted a tipped ball nobody else on the field seemed to find, and he scored the touchdown that ignited a 44-0 rout.

Twice in a row, Dent knocked the ball out of Jet quarterback Ken O'Brien's hand when most players would have settled for knocking the quarterback down. His game against the Giants in the playoffs was a one-man highlight film.

A PLAYER LIKE DENT makes his teammates look for big plays, too. "When Dent makes a sack, you can see the tempo pick up. It makes me charge even harder from the other side," linebacker Otis Wilson says.

"It looks like one guy is trying to outdo the other guy, but they're all playing together," Ditka says. "It looks like one guy is trying to run faster than the other guy to get to the ball. If one guy's not there, somebody else makes it up."

"When you're playing well, your confidence level is elevated so much. You start believing you're capable of doing what hasn't been done or what people say can't be done. Then those things start becoming natural to you."

EVEN THE MOST aware players have to be in position to make big plays. That's where the scheme comes in.

Continued Next Page



DEFENSIVE END DAN Hampton (99) cuts off Los Angeles running back Eric Dickerson. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

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Defense

Continued From Page 15

Xs and Os. Ryan puts his Xs where the other guy's Os want to go. He knows where they want to go by the way they line up, and the players react accordingly.

"If they're doing exactly the things Buddy talked to us about, it's sort of like, Wow! They're really doing it," middle linebacker Mike Singletary says. "We didn't just study it for nothing."

"We go out there and they do what we think they're going to try, and we begin to make big plays because we're expected to make big plays. Buddy expects us to do our jobs and even more sometimes."

LIKE KNOCK THE quarterback out of the game? That's not what Singletary means. He means Ryan grades them down for blowing a big play that comes their way, even if they fulfilled their assignments. This business of calling the Bears headhunters, that makes Singletary furious. He has said he won't let Wilber Marshall pay the \$2,000 fine from the league office for his shot to Lion quarterback Joe Ferguson. He'll take up a collection.

The Bears don't try to hurt people, Singletary says. Even at Detroit, quarterback Eric Hipple praised the Bears for not hitting him low when they knew he had a bad knee.

"If I had the opportunity tomorrow to make the same hit [Marshall made], I'd do it," Singletary says. "We thought it was a great hit."

"The fine doesn't matter. It's certainly not going to alter the way Otis plays or Dent or anyone else. They can fine us until the well runs dry. But if we can go to the Super Bowl doing it, we're just going to keep doing it."

Practice Schedule

The Bears are practicing this week under an air-inflated bubble at Memorial Stadium on the University of Illinois campus in Champaign. They will practice there through Saturday and return to Chicago Saturday afternoon. They will depart for New Orleans on Monday.

Ditka, Berry Honored

Head coach Mike Ditka has been selected as the NFC Coach of the Year by United Press International. Raymond Berry of the Patriots was chosen as the AFC Coach of the Year.

Dickerson

Continued From Page 6

the five before Gary Fencik hauled him down and the clock expired.

"I thought they'd throw it into the end zone," said Fencik. "By throwing into the end zone they really couldn't lose. If they get a touchdown it's great for them and if they miss, the clock stops and they have time to set themselves for a field goal."

Los Angeles head coach John Robinson defended his call, claiming his team did have the chance to stop the clock even after the questionable call.

"WE DID CALL TIME out right before the first half ended, but it just depends on how long the ref takes to recognize that a player has called time out."

So while the clock proved to be a Bear ally to help thwart the Rams' lone threat of the first half, the Bear defense as a unit made sure there were no other chances.

"Our defense has 11 guys who play so well because they are all trying to outdo each other," observed Bears' coach Mike Ditka. He has molded this team in his own image, but is saving his biggest smile for when he is able to complete the winning trilogy of becoming the first in-

dividual ever to play, serve as an assistant coach and then direct as a head coach a winning Super Bowl performance.

LINING UP IN the famed "46", the Bears tamed Dickerson by shutting off all avenues to run. Their was never a hole to be found and his outside speed was strung out and his cutback moves through the middle were buried under a wave of gang-tackling Bears.

"These guys are never satisfied. When Dickerson would gain a yard or two, everybody in the huddle was barking at each other. It's like we're not satisfied unless we tackle the guy behind the line," said Wilber Marshall, who would later cap the defensive gem with a 52-yard sprint for a touchdown via a fumble recovery.

It's safe to say the defense was satisfied in the end, as Dickerson totaled only 46 yards in 17 carries, 200 yards less than he galloped for against the vaunted Cowboy flex alignment in the divisional showdown at Anaheim a week earlier.

"THEY TOOK US OUT of our game plan and stayed in that eight-man front most of the day. It's really tough to run against that," sighed Dickerson. His teammates in front of him shouldered the blame for his dismal afternoon.

"If Eric had room to run, he would have run. It was one of those days when we just didn't play very well," noted Rams' right guard Dennis Harrah.

Cabral Activated

Linebacker Brian Cabral, who had been on injured-reserve since training camp with a knee injury, has been activated. He replaced wide receiver Brad Anderson who sustained a hand injury in a practice session prior to the Bears-Giants game.

Bears-Patriots History

The Patriots hold a 3-2 advantage over the Bears in all games played between the clubs since the series began in 1972. The teams are 2-2 in the regular season and the Patriots are 1-0 in the preseason.

All-Rookie Honors

Placekicker Kevin Butler and defensive tackle William Perry have been selected to the UPI All-Rookie team. Butler finished second (behind San Francisco 49er wide receiver Jerry Rice) in the voting for the NFC Rookie of the Year.

Payton

Continued From Page 6

into the corner to start the game, which bottled the Rams inside their own 20 on their first possession. That helped set the tone for a long afternoon for the blue and gold.

Butler also drilled a 35-yard field goal that knifed its way through the swirling wind and was perfect on all three extra point conversions.

"I DID THE THINGS I needed to do today. It was important for me, because I knew I was going to play a big role in the game. And you saw how big the kicking game turned out to be," grinned Butler.

"We've been lacking, especially me, in the performances of the past, but I think the consistent effort we were after came our way today," added Butler.

The consistent effort in this contest and in the season as a whole is the main reason for the Bears claiming the **NFC prize and it is a feat that in the end came as really no surprise.**

"I knew we were ready to play. I could tell when we were in Georgia we were ready, because we were so anxious to leave. We knew what we had to do," concluded Ditka.

Game Statistics

Continued From Page 4

PUNTING	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TB	In 20	LG
Buford	10	363	36.3	0	2	55

PUNT RETURNS	No.	FC	Yds.	LG	TD
Ortego	4	0	21	8	0
Duerson	0	1	0	0	0

KICKOFF RETURNS	No.	Yds.	LG	TD
Gentry	1	22	22	0

FUMBLES	Fum.	Own	Opp.	Out
McMahon	1	0	-3	0
Phillips	1	0	0	0
Payton	1	0	0	0
Richardson	0	0	1	0
Marshall	0	0	1	52
Covert	0	1	0	0

DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

(Unofficial)

Los Angeles

	T	A	SK	YL	Int.	PD	FR
Johnson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cromwell	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newsome	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Gray	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Green	3	0	0	0	0	0	0

Irvin	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Couins	6	4	0	0	0	0	0
Wilcher	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Exern	7	2	0	0	0	1	0
Owens	3	2	0	0	0	0	0
Meisner	3	2	0	0	0	0	0
DeJurnett	3	2	0	0	0	0	0
Doss	7	2	1	7	0	0	0
Jeter	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Greene	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Reed	3	3	2	13	0	0	0
Hill	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Dickerson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ellard	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Forced Fumbles: Irvin 1

Chicago

	T	A	SK	YL	Int.	PD	FR
Frazier	3	0	0	0	1	3	0
Duerson	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Richardson	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Fencik	7	3	0	0	0	0	0
Phillips	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Singletary	7	1	0	0	0	1	0
Thrift	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Wilson	4	2	0	0	0	0	0
Marshall	3	4	0	0	0	0	1
Rivera	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Perry	2	1	1	7	0	0	0
McMichael	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dent	2	0	1	11	0	0	0
Keys	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Hampton	4	0	1	4	0	0	0
Covert	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Forced Fumbles: Hampton 1, Wilson 1, Dent 1

SPECIAL TEAM STATS

Rams

Tackles: Newsome 2, Vann 2, Jerue 1. Assists: Greene, Fumble Recovery: Gray 2

Bears

Tackles: Thrift 2, Gentry 2, Hilgenberg 2, Rivera 1, Butler 1, Phillips 1. Assists: Morrissey 2, Gentry 1.

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Halas Trophy Presented

Following the Bears' victory over the Rams in the NFC Championship, Ed & Virginia McCaskey were presented with the George S. Halas Trophy. The trophy honors the late George Halas, who was the founder of the Bears and the former president of the National Conference. It is the first time a trophy has ever been presented to an NFC champion.

Thomas Had a 'Difficult' Season With Chargers

You can take Bob Thomas out of Chicago for a while, but you certainly can't take Chicago out of Bob Thomas.

After his highly-publicized duel with Kevin Butler for Bears' kicking duties earlier this season, Thomas was sent packing and signed with the Chargers. He was emotionally hurt at being cast out by the Bears and, even though happy to have been picked up by San Diego, he longed to be home in Chicago, with the Bears.

"AFTER BEING WITH the Bears for 10 years and then being way out there in San Diego, thousands of miles away, I realized how much the Bears meant to me," he says. "You can't just forget a decade of your life, just wipe it away like it was nothing."

"Some people around the United States might criticize Chicago. Out in California the people talk about their weather and ask me, 'How can you go back to Chicago? How can you leave California for anywhere else?' That's the way Californians are. But when you really think about it, Chicago's a great city."

"I left 80-degree weather in San Diego to come home at the end of the season. When the plane landed at O'Hare the temperature was probably 10 degrees and it was snowing. I was standing there, waiting for a limo to take me home," he reflects, "and I didn't care that it was cold out. I was home. California will never be my home. I couldn't have been any happier at that moment, because I was home."

WHILE IN SAN Diego Thomas was constantly being asked by the news media about the Bears, who were winning every game but one.

"There were articles in the San Diego newspapers that said, in essence, 'here's a guy who kicked 80 percent for the Bears last year, who made his last 11 kicks in a row, who had been the Bears' all-time scorer, who was named to the all-time Bears team. Here's a guy who is out here now while the Bears are having a legitimate chance of going to the Super Bowl.'"

"I thought about that a while, to be honest, and it did kind of bother me. You know, you wish you were back there. But part of that wishing and part of that hurt are based on thinking that things could be different, that things could be changed, that you could be put back into that

situation.

"BUT THINGS COULDN'T be different," he continues. "They were what they were. Life goes on. You have to do your job and concentrate on now, not then."

Chargers' kicker Rolf Benirschke went on injured reserve after the first game, so Thomas kicked in the next 15. "To be honest, it was a tough season," he appraises, "from a field goal standpoint."

"You hear a lot about how important your holder is and, well, when I went to the Chargers they had just let both their holders go. They had to find a holder, so the guy they used was Ralf Mojsiejenko, who was a kicker and a pun-

By
Michael
Haggerty



ter who had never held. Never.

"THEY WENT THROUGH a couple of centers," Thomas goes on, "and it was quite a learning year. They were new at kicker, at holder and at center. It was definitely a year of transition."

"I had been used to the steadiness of such holders as Brian Baschnagel and Steve Fuller with the Bears. So it was a difficult year with San Diego, but considering all those elements with the Chargers, I think that I had a pretty good year with them," opines Thomas, who was the division's second-best kicker.

He signed a one-year contract with the Chargers, so technically he should be a free agent Feb. 1. However, San Diego tendered him a contract offer the final week

of the season. They now have the right of first refusal if he receives offers from other NFL teams after Feb. 1.

"WHAT THAT MEANS," points out Thomas, who is an attorney in the off-season, "is that if another team would sign me for anything over whatever the compensation level is these days — I think it's \$100,000 — the Chargers would get a first-round draft pick from that team."

"That's why free agency doesn't work in the National Football League. That's why Walter Payton, despite his greatness, wasn't really a free agent. So, with Rolf Benirschke coming back next season, maybe I'll get traded to another team."

Thomas would, of course, welcome a return to Chicago and the Bears. "That would be great," says Thomas, "but something like an injury to Kevin Butler, God forbid, would have to happen."

"I THINK THAT Kevin Butler has done a great job for the Bears this season. I never doubted that he could be a quality kicker. But look at the age difference; he's 23 and I'm going on 33."

Yet there are still stirrings in Bob Thomas' soul.

He simply hasn't been willing to purge the Bears from his system, although he looks to the alternative as an opportunity.

"THE BEARS AND I had struggled through a number of seasons together, and I had struggled through some seasons here in Chicago," he recalls.

"When the 1985 season was shaping up, I knew that it was going to be a great season for the Bears. I prayed. I talked to God and told him how much it meant to me to be in Chicago. But I also said that I was going to put this into his hands."

"I think that when we do that, if we're really asking that his will be done, then there's some reason things happen the way they do. God doesn't go 'oops' after he makes a decision. I just trust that there was some reason for it. And there was a lot of good in being out in San Diego, especially with the new friendships I made."

Thomas, who was added to WGN radio's Bears' broadcast team for the playoffs, isn't certain when his NFL career will come to an end. Some kickers have a way of staying on and on in the league.



PLACEKICKER KEVIN BUTLER (left) congratulates Willie Gault after the speedster scores a touchdown. (Bear Report photo by Jonathan Daniel)

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RESULTS AND ATTENDANCE (Actual)										RUSHING						
J 5 (S)	Chicago 21, N.Y. Giants 0				62,076						W Payton	45	125	2.8	12	0
J 12 (S)	Chicago 24, L.A. Rams 0				63,522						M Suhey	12	56	4.7	9	0
										J McMahon	9	46	5.1	16	1	
										C Thomas	7	10	1.4	5	0	
										D McKinnon	1	-7	-7.0	0	0	
										D Gentry	3	8	2.7	7	0	

Bear Report Letters

1271 W. Dundee Rd.

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BEAR REPORT welcomes all Letters to the Editor. Due to space limitations, it may be necessary to shorten letters to fill the space available. BEAR REPORT does not necessarily agree with the views stated in the letters we receive. Unsigned letters will not be printed.

Another Great Year

Dear Sir:

Thank you for another great year of your BEAR REPORT. You have talent on your staff as great as the Bears do on the field.

We are so proud of the many accomplishments of coach Ditka and the Bears. The entire organization outshines the rest of the league. This club will be a powerhouse for many years to come.

Bear fans in this area, however, are shocked that Kevin Butler did not make the Pro Bowl. His Georgia Bulldog followers ask the NFL, "What else do you want to see from this kid?" Mr. Butler is definitely the premier kicker in the game today. We are angry and confused but we know that this Bear will be even more determined in the Super Bowl. Show 'em Kevin.

Bob Staninger, President

Chicago Bear Fan Club of Jacksonville, FL

Undefeated Season Ahead

Dear Doug:

As a youngster growing up in Polo, Illinois, I started listening to radio reports of Chicago Bears' games over WBBM more than 50 years ago. Those were the days of Bronco Nagurski, Carl Brumbaugh, Jack Manders and company. As a teenager, I thrilled to that 73-0 win over the Redskins with Sid Luckman, Hugh Gallarneau, Danny Fortmann and Bulldog Turner. As a father, my children grew up with the 1960s Bears and one daughter carried on a personal correspondence with Billy Wade, while her sisters admired Richie Petitbon and Bill George. Now my grandsons are learning the Bear traditions with new heroes, Walter Payton, Dan Hampton and Mike Singletary. What I am saying is that the Chicago Bears have had three generations of rooters in the family and I still exult with them in the victories and suffer in the defeats.

As my one daughter said, "There are no former Bear fans." My congratulations to the Bear management, coaching staff and players on a fine year. May it continue on and on. And congratulations to you, too, Doug on the Bear Report, the only way we fans in the hinterlands have of keeping current. Just one suggestion — might not a short section on former Bear players and games add a bit of spice to your publication. We old-timers could relive some memories and younger readers could learn of the fine tradition behind the modern Bears, a "what became of Bill Osmanski?" type of thing.

One question: how are schedules drawn up, who determines what opponents a team faces? Judging from the schedule of next year printed in the Jan. 2, 1986 Report, the Bears should be a shoo-in next year. Of the 12 teams they face, only three won more than half their games — Rams (11-4), Dallas (10-6) and Cleveland (8-8). The composite record of next year's foes is 83 wins and 108 defeats. Throw out the three teams mentioned previously and the record is 62 wins and 98 losses. If the Bears don't match that Miami undefeated record in 1986, they will never have a chance.

If Walter Payton isn't the finest running back to play the game, I'd like to know who is. If he had run behind the Cowboy offensive line, he would have set records that would never be broken. Finally, he's getting the recognition he so richly deserves.

Best wishes to the Modern Monsters of the Midway.

Sincerely,

Jack R. Terry

Kimberling City, Mo.

Editor's Note: Besides the home-and-away series with division foes, the other teams on the schedule are determined by order of finish. For example, because the Bears finished first in the NFC Central, they will face the first and fourth place teams in the NFC East and NFC West. Each NFC division plays a different AFC division every year. Thus, the top four finishers in the NFC Central this season faced the top four teams from the AFC East (based on order of finish in 1984). Next season, the top four NFC Central clubs (based on order of '85 finish) face all the teams in the AFC Central. In 1987, the NFC Central will face the AFC West. Home and road designations are also determined by order of finish.

Mid-America Supports Bears

Dear Doug:

Just a note to thank you for all the work of you and your staff. You have increased the enjoyment of this fine 15-1 season if that is possible.

I'm sure glad to see how all mid-America has risen up to show their Bear colors this season.

Congrats to coach Ditka: 15-1 ain't all bad in a league as tough as this one.

Ken Wilson

Speedway, IN

Continued Next Page

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More Letters

Continued From Page 18

Defense Is More Vital

Dear Doug,

As a Bear fan who has not missed a game in 10 years, I would like to enter this discussion concerning the relative merits of Ditka and Ryan. To any of you who have read Bear Bryant's autobiography, he states "A great team is 60% defense, 25% special teams and 15% offense." I don't think the Bears follow that formula. I would rate them 65% defense, 20% offense and 15% special teams. There is no doubt the Bears are a Super Bowl team because of their defense — take away Payton and the offense is only average.

Whether he deserves it or not, Ditka will get the Coach of the Year award. The reasoning will be that the Bears improved tremendously under his tenure. Is he going to be holding onto Buddy Ryan's coat tails? The answer is a big, fat YES. When Ditka's partisans talk about his abilities, they never mention that he is a great tactician, which he is not. They always point out his intensity and his ability to motivate. I can't buy this — great pre-game speeches and half-time speeches died in the Knute Rockne plane crash. Week in and week out a great team wins simply being better than their opponents. A nice gesture on Ditka's part would be to present the award to the defensive unit and say, "You did it — I didn't."

Ditka never gave an inch when he played, nor will he give away the trophy. Whether he deserves it or not can be argued until doomsday.

Fred Kowalski
Barrington, IL

Ryan Is a Genius

Dear Editor:

I read with interest Walt Morris' rebuttal (Dec. 26 Issue) to Steve Hoppe's letter. I can recall a letter Walt wrote being very critical of Buddy Ryan earlier in the season. Among other things he said Buddy Ryan had nothing but a big mouth. Now he has relented and admits Buddy Ryan belongs on the Bears' coaching staff. Walt sounds like he is Ditka's brother-in-law. By my book, the Bears are 15-1. Eleven of those games were won by Buddy Ryan's defense. The man's a genius. Without him the Bears would be nowhere.

Also, Walt the Mouth by a stroke of his pen promoted Ditka to Director of Player Personnel. He put him in charge of the draft. This will probably come as a shock to Bill Tobin, who has direct-

ed the Bear draft for at least the past seven years.

Sam Retchin
Prospect Hts., IL

Bears On Hit List

Dear Doug,

The fact that the Bears almost achieved a perfect season is amazing considering their away schedule outside the division: San Francisco, Dallas, Miami and the Jets. They were all playoff teams and except for the Jets, traditional powers. Next year the schedule is considerably easier with the NFC Central and AFC Central playing each other. An undefeated season would be possible next year too except for the fact that everyone will be looking to knock off the Bears next year.

Leo Ryan
Ft. Wayne, IN

A Storybook Season

Dear Doug,

The Bears have had a storybook year from start to finish, almost unbeaten, but that is not of major importance. But their 15-1 record is. Their defense was great all year and the offense to me good enough to win, but still an enigma. I kept waiting for that big blowout: Dallas? 44-0. Still that was for a large part by the defense. The Vikings: McMahon's two throws, two touchdowns, almost three. That's what I expected.

Play selections are good but how many times has the quarterback rolled out, receiver open and the ball is overthrown or the pass was dropped. Yet they caught enough to win. But if the offense had clicked like the defense, there would be 60-0 scores. Next year maybe? The potential is there and if McMahon can stay healthy, there will be many good things to come.

Joe Bryan
Wheatland, CA

Stinks Like Dead Fish

Dear Doug,

The selection of Marcus Allen as the Most Valuable Player smells like last week's fish. Once again, the powers that be have stuck it to us. Not selecting Walter and recognizing him as he is: the absolute MOST VALUABLE PLAYER of this or any other year. It just makes me nauseous and mad as hell.

Rick Conti
Medford, Mass.

A Little Understanding

Dear Doug:

Let me make one more plea for understanding of Bear management by Vic Fiebig (BEAR REPORT Letters 1/2/86): Vic, I'm sure you read Kevin Lamb's column (Dec. 26 BEAR REPORT) giving an insight on Mr. McCaskey's thinking. He presented five points from the point of view of Bear management. I call your attention to #2... "A prudent and businesslike management of resources." Could we tie this in with your #1 of submarine training bylaws — "You're not as good as you think you are?" And apply both to the handling of Bell and Harris.

I don't know what they asked — nor what McCaskey and Vainisi offered — but, based on their performances, I have a feeling it was fair, and probably negotiable had they reported to training camp. I feel sure that if a couple of your "key" men refused to reenlist you could replace them, and with only a small loss of efficiency until two others could be trained. I'm sure there have been some occasions where a man wouldn't settle for a promotion alone but wanted Admiral's pay for Seaman's work. I don't believe that you on the government would even waiver in such a case. I have been a Halas and Bear fan since the Decatur Staleys (I am 72 years young). But I have also been a businessman. I not only agree with McCaskey's approach — but, if I didn't, I wouldn't hesitate to argue with a Ph.D. who had been a successful business consultant for several large corporations about how to conduct "prudent and businesslike management of resources."

The ice cream parlor has different flavors only because people have different opinions, preferences and tastes. Yours and my opinions and tastes may differ — but I'm sure we both would prefer to see the Bears win the Super Bowl. On this we can agree wholeheartedly. And I know they will with us pulling for them. So start pulling, Vic. I started in September.

Sincerely,
Tom Sanders
Dallas, TX

Dent Contract Update

Defensive end Richard Dent has received a new contract offer from the Bears that will pay him \$1.1 million in base salary over the next three years. He could make more through incentive clauses, but Dent says he isn't pleased with the offer from the club. He has threatened to sit out the Super Bowl if his contract situation isn't settled.

"I don't know what I'm gonna do," Dent said following the NFC Championship Game. I'll make the final decision. My agent (Everett Glenn) just works for me."



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